



michèle didier

PRESS RELEASE

Allan McCollum

The Book of Shapes

The exhibition will open on Thursday March 21, 2013 from 6 pm to 9 pm.
The Book of Shapes will be held from March 22 to May 18, 2013.

Lecture about the *Shapes* by Allan McCollum himself
on Thursday April 25, 2013 at 7 pm.

Summary

The Book of Shapes

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The Book of Shapes

A publication and an exhibition

The Book of Shapes exhibition will be based on the eponym publication by the artist Allan McCollum, produced in 2010 by mfc-michèle didier. As the title indicates, *The Book of Shapes* has a specific interest for shapes; it is directly related to *The Shapes Project*, a project initiated by McCollum in 2005. It is therefore interesting to take a moment to remember the origin of the MFC acronym that is part of the name of the publisher, mfc-michèle didier. MFC are the initials of « Maîtres de Forme Contemporains » (Masters of contemporary forms) and directly refer to the Bauhaus masters of form. The Bauhaus' faculty members were form masters, artists, craftsmen and workshop masters. Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919, after the merger of the Weimar Academy of Fine Art and the School of Arts and Crafts:

« Let us then create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist! Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity (...) », he said.

It was more complex than he expected to build this future without any division where « autonomous creation » would equal « industrial creation ». The Bauhaus masters didn't agree with Gropius' vision. If they concurred on the same goal, namely an art shared by all, they were categorically against the idea to turn to the industry. In reality, most of them already thought that the crafts and the arts weren't subject to the same rules. But they considered that there could be interactions and analogies between both practices. On the other side, the relationship with the industrial process seemed for them impossible. Because of the production methods of mechanical fabrication, they thought the industry would be at opposite ends of what creative work is supposed to be.

In a way, *The Shapes Project* consists of a possible extension of the Bauhaus' internal concerns and the ideological conflict between the defenders of the arts & crafts opposed to industrial production and the supporters of the disappearance of the limits between discipline and production process. Allan McCollum overcomes this contention, with the aim to make a work that has an almost ecumenical dimension.

More concretely, *The Shapes Project* consists of a system that generates more than thirty-one billion different shapes, made from a combination of six groups of elements. Each shape is supposed to be assigned to one individual. Since the UN established that the world population would peak at over 9.1 billion people in 2050, this system offers an ample supply of shapes allowing everyone to have their own «form-shape», whose use could be left to each and every one's discretion.

Allan McCollum's *The Book of Shapes* publication is composed of two volumes. Volume I contains the patterns, while volume II includes the instructions and guides for creating all possible combinations made from these components. Based on the analysis of mass production, *The Shapes Project* presents a paradox: the artist's

wish to produce a work of art at a massive scale, but ensuring at the same time that none of these objects, although created from the same mold, are similar. *The Book of Shapes* lets thus grasp the magnitude of this plan.

The Shapes are supposed to exist physically. The different shapes composed with the help of the book can be graphically printed as silhouettes or as simple contour line, whichever the size, color or texture; the choice of the technique isn't prescribed. It is also possible to manufacture, trim or cut *The Shapes* from wood, plastic, metal, stone or any other material.

The exhibition at mfc-michèle didier gallery will display the publication along with a selection of *Shapes* made by Allan McCollum up to this day. The exhibition will focus on the Silhouettes and the *Shapes Ornaments*, both issued from *The Shapes From Maine* project, a series of three-dimensional and a series of two-dimensional declinations of the *Shapes*. They will resonate perfectly with the content of *The Book of Shapes*, the core of the exhibition.

The foundations of *The Shapes Project* have today been laid, but Allan McCollum alone won't be able to complete the mission he wants to accomplish. The artist invites us thus all to contribute and to really materialize the monumental ensemble. Let's make the count in 2050.



Allan McCollum

The Book of Shapes

2 volumes

21,6 x 27.9 cm each

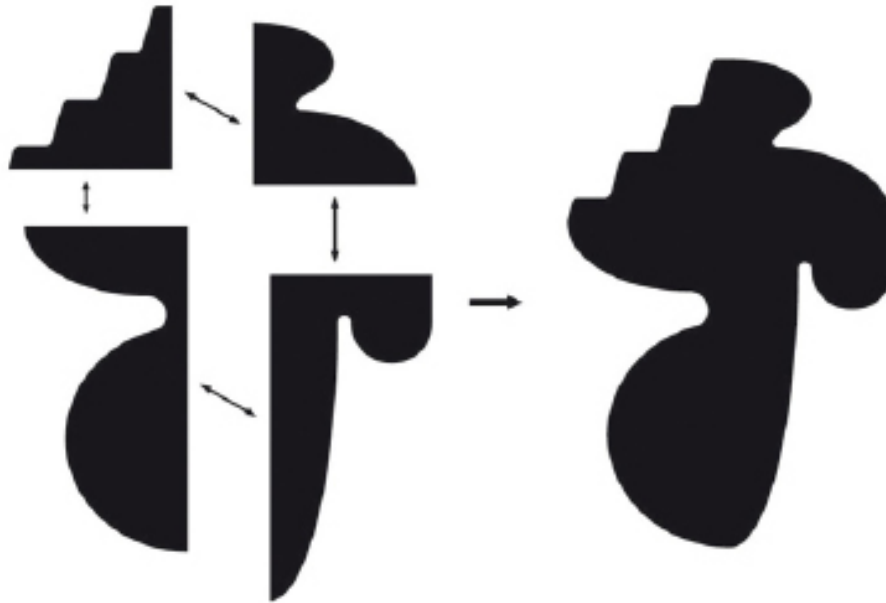
Volume I: 632 pages, volume II: 360 pages

Limited edition of 70 sets of 2 volumes and 10 artist's proofs

Certificate numbered and signed by the artist

Produced and published in 2010 by mfc-michèle didier

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214,990,848 "4-part" shapes may be created by combining 4 "shapes parts," as depicted above, in a sequence outlined in the following pages.

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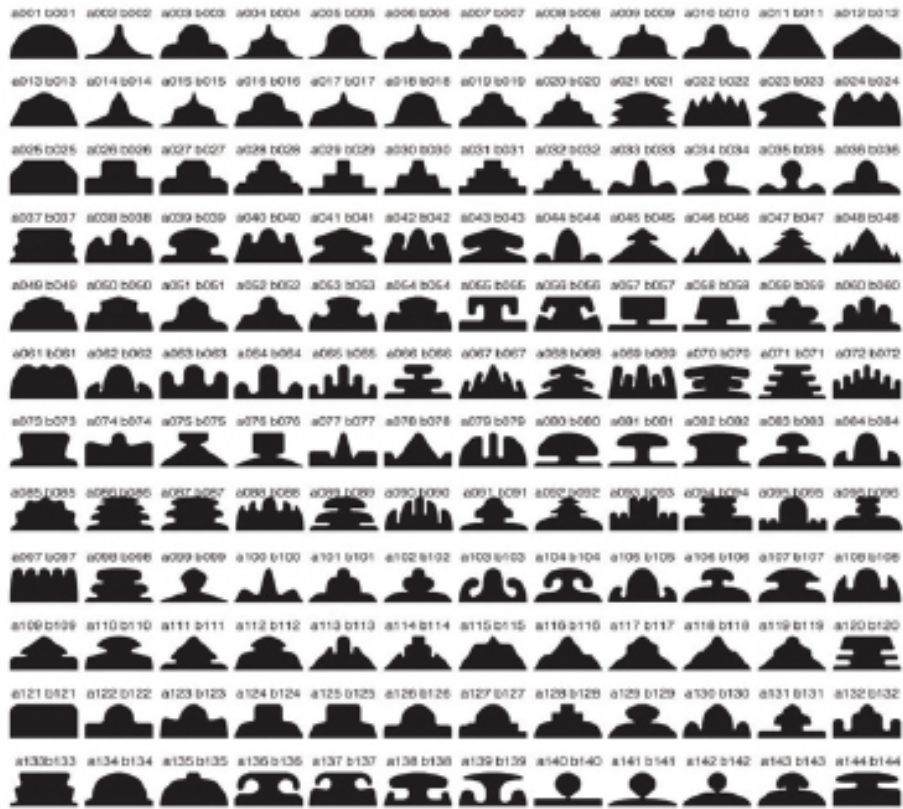
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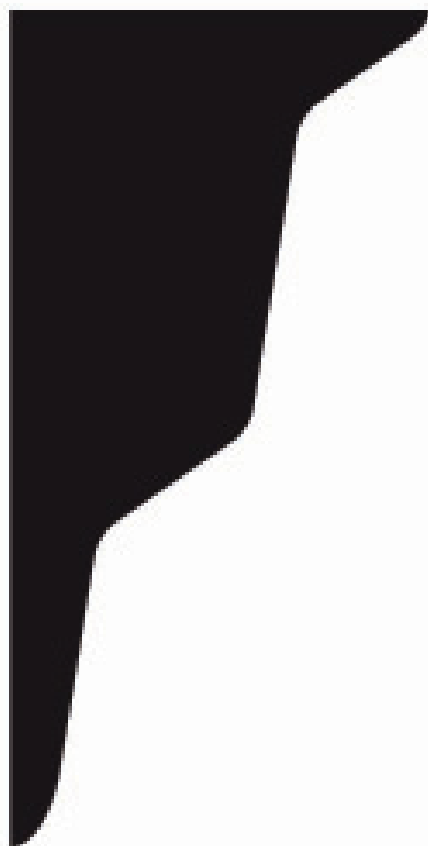
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The Shapes Project: Shapes From Maine Shapes Silhouettes
2005/2008

Acid-free hand-cut silhouette paper on 4-ply museum board

Collection of 12, each one mounted and framed

17,1 x 22,2 x 1,9 cm each

Each one with signed authentication card

Courtesy Petzel gallery, New York



The Shapes Project: Shapes From Maine Shapes Ornaments

2005/2008

New England Rock Maple

Collection of 144

5,7 x 8,6 x 1,3 cm each

Each one with signed authentication card

Courtesy Petzel gallery, New York

Allan McCollum - Biography

Allan McCollum is born in Los Angeles, in 1944.
He lives and works in New York.

Allan McCollum studied for over forty years the way objects acquire a public and personal signification in a world built by mass production. In 2005, he conceives *The Shapes Project*, a system destined to produce a « strictly unique form for each individual on the planet, without any repetition ».

His first solo exhibition was held in 1970 at Nicholas Wilder's gallery, who has represented him in Los Angeles until he had to close at the end of the seventies. Later, he joined Claire S. Copley Gallery, also located in Los Angeles. After he participated in various exhibitions at the Pasadena Art Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, his first exhibition on the New York art scene was held by Sidney Janis Gallery in 1972. His work was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial in 1975. He moved to New York the same year.

From 1978, he has been known for his *Surrogate Paintings*, which have been shown at a number of solo exhibitions in New York at Julian Preto & Co., Artistspace and 112 Workshop (later also known as White Columns). In 1980, he had his first solo exhibition in Europe, at galerie Yvon Lambert in Paris and the same year, he started showing his works at Marian Goodman Gallery in New York, where he exhibited for the first time his series of *Plaster Surrogates* during a major solo exhibition in 1983. Allan McCollum began his collaboration with Lisson Gallery in London in 1985. In 1987, he joined John Weber Gallery in New York, until 1996; he is since represented in New York by Friedrich Petzel Gallery.

A selection of his retrospectives:

Musée d'Art Moderne, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Lille, France (1998)

Sprengel Museum, Hanovre, Germany (1995-96)

Serpentine Gallery, London (1990)

Rooseum Contemporary Art Centre, Malmö, Sweden (1990)

IVAM Centre del Carme, Valencia, Spain (1990)

Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (1989)

Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany (1988)

Allan McCollum has produced numerous public art projects both in the United States and in Europe and his works are included in more than seventy museum collections all over the world.

Allan McCollum's work has been displayed in many collective exhibitions:

« Singular Forms », The Guggenheim Museum, New York (2004)

« The Museum as Muse », The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1999)

« L'Informe: Mode d'Emploi », Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France (1996)

« Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life », The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1996)

« Allegories of Modernism », The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992)

« The 1991 Carnegie International », The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania (1991)

« The 1991 Sydney Biennale », Sydney, Australia (1991)

« Image World: Art and Media Culture », The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1989)

« A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation », The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1989)

« Aperto », the 43rd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (1988)

« Implosion: ett postmodernt perspektiv », Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (1984)

« Ailleurs et Autrement », Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (1984)

A number of major authors have published papers on Allan McCollum's work, including Rhea Anastas, Nicolas Bourriaud, Martha Buskirk, Lynne Cooke, Hal Foster, Andrea Fraser, Suzi Gablik, Claude Gintz, Rosalind Krauss, Thomas Lawson, MaryJo Marques, Johannes Meinhardt, John Miller, Helen Molesworth, Lars Nittve, Craig Owens, Catherine Quéloz and Anne Rorimer.



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